

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please delete the paragraph that begins on page 6, line 1 and ends on page 6, line 10 and replace it with the paragraph that appears below. All of the amendments to this paragraph are highlighted in the attached Appendix A.

The protective housing 80 comprises a protective housing base 82 and a protective housing top 84. The protective housing top 84 is adapted to be removably coupled with the protective housing base 82. The protective housing 80 defines an internal cavity that is sized and shaped to receive the splice housing 50. The protective housing 80 is utilized when the splice housing 30 is buried in the ground. The protective housing 80 serves to deflect the strain associated with backfilling an excavation in which the fiber optic cable 20 is located. One such protective housing is available from U-Teck. The protective housing is preferably assembled by bolting the various components to one another.

Please delete the paragraph that begins on page 9, line 4 and ends on page 9, line 9 and replace it with the paragraph that appears below. All of the amendments to this paragraph are highlighted in the attached Appendix A.

In a further preferred embodiment, the splice housing 50 can be enclosed within the protective housing 80 as depicted in FIG. 10. After splice housing 50 has been assembled, as described above, the splice housing 50 can be placed within the base of the protective housing 82 (step 710). The top of the protective housing 84 can then be coupled with the base of the protective housing 82 (step 720).